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HENRY O. MARCY

PERSONAL SERVICE  
AS THE ESPECIAL EXPONENT  
OF A GREAT PROFESSION

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# Personal Service As the Especial Exponent Of a Great Profession

BY

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## PERSONAL SERVICE AS THE ESPECIAL EXPONENT OF A GREAT PROFESSION.<sup>1</sup>

BY HENRY O. MARCY, A.M., M.D., LL.D.

As we stand by the opening door of the twentieth century, we would gladly draw aside the curtain and forecast for present profit something which the experience of the coming decades will have in store.

To the graduates of to-day, how interesting the vision!

From henceforth life is seen by you through a new medium.

*We* have witnessed the ceremonies as interested spectators. *You* have approached the sacred altar and taken upon yourselves the vows to-day, which from this time, set you apart for a special service. From nothing, which the demands of an intelligent citizenship places upon her supreme rulers, are you exempt, but in addition have you openly accepted new duties, new obligations, which are fraught with the heaviest of responsibilities. Wedded to the profession of your deliberate choosing, it becomes our pleasing privilege to bestow the benediction, as you emerge from your faithful apprenticeship. To your beloved teachers these annual graduations are interesting occasions; but to you it is the culminating point in the life-history which has no repetition.

Do we, your elders, not remember it? Years, few or many, are not sufficient to intervene, which do not place us to-night upon a level of common interest and sympathy. New recruits in this great army, you have

<sup>1</sup> Delivered at the Annual Commencement of the College of Medicine of Syracuse University, June 6, 1895.

been given the countersign, and the query at once arises,

What shall the service be?  
Of what shall it profit me,  
May I the future see  
Of success a certainty!

The parable of the talents, as given by the Great Master, may be read to-night in a new light, the law of self-interest governed by a new force. Life is a bank into which we make a daily deposit of service rendered to others, against the value of which we may freely draw, as our own, the entire credit for personal benefit.

If this is true, the acquisition of the means for deposit is the one subject of absorbing interest, for are we not agreed that personal needs are likely to continue very pressing, and that educated men are expensive animals!

"How I may best serve others as the especial exponent of a great profession," might seem the fitting topic of the hour upon which to address you.

Is it that you are to treat the rank and file of suffering humanity as bad priests of the mother church give absolution to suplicants, who accept the same without thought of a regenerative life, and thus you dole out bitter potions of doubtful drugs in answer to "What shall I take for my cure?" rather than sit as the real high priest of our most noble calling and teach the violation of physical laws and the means of their harmonic restoration!

Remember while you reverently profit by all the lessons of revealed religion, that you are the *more* rather than the *less*, the teacher of natural laws, which *you* read in the living light of the unerring repetition of the generations about you; that the physical, the mental and the moral are but phases of the one great vital force which we call life.

Until a recent period scientists thought that heat, light and electricity were independent forces. He who demonstrated that they were only different phases of one and the same great power, and gave to man the key of transposition, heralded a new age of progress, the foreshadowing of which is beyond present estimate.

This day you are invested in the panoply of office which makes you the high priests of a trinity, the teaching of which has not been handed down through twenty centuries by a priesthood and subject to multiple error, but read in letters of living light in the life about you. May it be your mission to lay broad the foundations of right living, a properly-developed vitality in the race, making easy transposition of the same into mentality and morality, the spiritual efflorescence which stamps us as divine.

As we approach a new era, very naturally we ask ourselves, What has been the fruitage of the past? and has the century just lapsing into history added to the store of the world's wisdom which challenges a favorable comparison with earlier periods and upon which coming generations may look back with approval?

The year to come will be set apart for the proper commemoration of the first great medical discovery which heralded the dawn of the present century; the arrest by vaccination of that great plague, the small-pox, which for centuries had stalked unchecked throughout all lands, leaving its unburied dead by the thousands, as the harvest of its destruction. Scarcely less fortunate were those who survived its withering touch, since the maimed, the helpless, and the blind were left in every hamlet, as life-long witnesses of the terrible scourge. To Edward Jenner belongs the immortal fame of having presented to mankind this boon, the value of which it is difficult even for us to estimate.

When some one great event crowns the life of an

individual, it is often remarked, that, but for this, he would have remained unknown, and that it was a lucky accident which made him famous. Thus some general, by chance in command of veteran cohorts, wins a battle, when the fate of a nation hangs trembling in the balance, and the laurels of immortality are entwined about the brow of a world's hero. If it ever happens, it comes as the exception to prove the rule, that behind the opportunity lay the life-long preparation which fitted the seizure of the supreme moment, and under the guidance of such a training moulded the destiny of empires.

Since the days of the Cæsars, the world had never seen a military genius equal to that of the "Little Corporal," who, at this hundred-years' period, had suddenly sprung full-fledged into the arena of victorious battle; but a careful study of Napoleon's character teaches that, young as he was, he had been schooled in a life-long training of adverse circumstances which had moulded his iron character, and had given him the power of concentration of all his splendid faculties upon the one problem of the hour.

To every individual comes some time, the full testing of his powers, and then, if found wanting, he falls deservedly into the rear of the column in disgrace, and is rarely heard from again. In the phraseology of the Biblical writers, "God calls us, and, if we hear not his voice, woe betide us." Thus will come to you, my young friends, some day the voice; will you be ready to answer the summons? The Roman philosopher said, "Let the training of the youth be in that to which he is to devote himself in life-long pursuit."

Let us pause for a moment, and see if Edward Jenner was a fitting example of the preparation which crowns a life with deserving success. Born in 1749, the son of a clergyman, with an elder brother of the same profession, young Jenner was carefully trained



in the classics, but at an early age, showed a taste for natural history. In the method of the period, he served an apprenticeship to a surgeon near Bristol, and upon its completion in 1770 went to London, entered as a student at St. George's Hospital, and had the singular good fortune to become the inmate of the family of the famous John Hunter. He soon became a favorite pupil. At this time, Mr. Hunter was forty-two. He was already a well-known teacher, had been a senior surgeon in the wars in Portugal; and in 1771 there was placed at his disposal the collections in natural history which had been brought home by the famous circumnavigator, Captain Cook.

Jenner was remarkable for the neatness and precision with which he made preparations of anatomy and natural history. His dissections of tender and delicate organs, his success in minute injections, and the taste which he displayed in their arrangement is said to have been almost unrivalled. He was solicited by Captain Cook to become the naturalist of his succeeding expedition, the following year, but Jenner's desire to settle in the place of his nativity was too strong to admit the acceptance of the appointment. He preferred the seclusion of a country village, and to this selection do we owe his transcendent gift to mankind. John Hunter, from the first, was very proud of Jenner. He wished him to unite in establishing a school in London to teach natural history, human and comparative anatomy. Although declined, the instructions of his great master were not lost upon the young country surgeon. Jenner not only possessed the proper spirit of inquiry necessary to a student of nature, but he endeavored to excite it in others. He was instrumental in establishing two societies of professional men in his neighborhood, meeting for the common purpose of advancing their knowledge upon subjects connected with their pursuits and for better personal acquaintance.

He was of a lively disposition, and distinguished for mirth, playfulness and wit. As a consequent, he was a general favorite. The following lines, addressed to a lady upon the recovery of her daughter, and sent with a pair of ducks, afford a specimen of his humor :

“ I’ve dispatched, my dear madam, this scrap of a letter,  
To say that Miss May is very much better;  
A regular doctor no longer she lacks,  
And therefore, I’ve sent her a couple of quacks.”

Although separated, the master and pupil were kept in touch by a regular correspondence. From a letter of Mr. Hunter, I quote you these inquiries, since they give a glimpse of the thoughts of both: “ See if you can catch the number of pulsations, and the frequency of breathing in the bat without torture. If the frost is hard, see what vegetables freeze; bore holes in large trees and see whether the sap runs out, which will show it is not frozen.”

Seeming trivial accidents often lead inquiring minds to most important conclusions. To the ordinary boy, the falling of the apple from the tree would have been accepted as a matter of course; not so to Newton. The clatter of the lid of the boiling tea-kettle, as lifted by the escaping steam, formulated to the mind of Watts, the harnessing into service a power which revolutionized the motor forces of the world.

While yet a pupil of Mr. Ludlow, a young country woman remarked, “ I cannot take small-pox, for I have had the cow-pock.” This incident never escaped Jenner’s recollection. He describes the process of inoculation which at this time was considered, and truly so, a very important discovery: “ bleeding until the blood was thin; purging until the body was wasted to a skeleton; and starving on vegetable diet to keep it so.” The patience manifested by Jenner in the prosecution of his studies upon cow-pock, the scrutiny to which he subjected every appearance that presented

itself, and the fortitude with which he withstood every untoward circumstance, are entitled to all praise, and exhibit his capabilities for conducting original investigations. He divested the subject of its difficulties and obscurities, and gave to vague, inapplicable, useless rumor the certainty and precision of scientific knowledge.

It would be interesting to know the influence and aid of his great master during this period; since at this very time Hunter, with a rare devotion, was pursuing his investigations upon the origin, course, and development of the great pock.

Dr. Jenner's first vaccination was on the fourteenth of May, 1796. Two years later he visited London for the purpose of demonstrating its value. Although he remained nearly three months, he was unable to induce a single professional friend to make the experiment, and returned to the country without having succeeded in prevailing upon a single individual to submit to inoculation of the virus. He pressed the subject so much with his professional brethren in the country that, at a medical club at Redborough, to which he belonged, he was threatened with expulsion if he persisted in harassing them with a proposition which they then conceived had no foundation but in popular and idle rumor, and which had become entirely distasteful to them.

Mr. Cline, of St. Thomas's Hospital, to whom some virus had been sent, clandestinely inserted it into the thigh of a patient suffering from hip disease with the thought of producing counter-irritation. The development of the vesicles interested him, and they were permitted to run their course without disturbance. Small-pox matter was after introduced in three places, but the slight inflammation soon subsided. The demonstrations were repeated with much enthusiasm. Mr. Cline soon urged Dr. Jenner to settle in London,

with the promise of an income of ten thousand pounds a year. I quote from his letter in reply: "Shall I who, even in the morning of my days, sought the lowly and sequestered paths of life, the valley and not the mountain; shall I, now the evening is fast approaching, hold myself up as an object for fortune and for fame? Admitting that it is a certainty that I obtain both, what stock should I add to my little fund of happiness? My fortune, with what flows in from my profession, is sufficient to gratify my wishes; indeed, so limited is my ambition, and that of my nearest connections, that were I precluded from future practice, I should be enabled to obtain all I want. And, as for fame, what is it? A gilded butt, forever pierced by the arrows of malignancy. The name of John Hunter stamps this observation with the signature of truth." It is very probable that this letter was written when smarting under the sting of ridicule and the sharpest criticism from the profession, from whom he had looked for support.

Sooner or later the world, however, recognizes the true value of its servants. Fortunately, Dr. Jenner lived long to enjoy his well-earned fame. Foreign societies and academies enrolled him in the list of honorary membership, and the home societies adorned their transactions with his name. Oxford granted him an honorary degree such as had not been conferred before in seventy years. Vaccination was instituted in the army and navy. Napoleon ordered the soldiers of the empire to be vaccinated; and the practice soon extended through the civilized world. Large sums of money were sent him, subscribed in various countries, even the far off East. Parliament voted him special honors. The following incident is worthy of mention: Dr. Wickham, one of the travelling Fellows of the University of Oxford was imprisoned in France. Dr. Jenner addressed a petition to Napoleon for his libera-



tion at the time when his animosity to England was at its height. It was presented when in his carriage, changing horses. "Away, away," exclaimed the emperor. "But do you see, said Josephine, who was beside him, do you see from whom it comes, Jenner?" The tone of Napoleon's voice was immediately softened; "What that man asks must not be refused." And the petition was granted.

Dr. Waterhouse, of Cambridge, who wrote his thesis in Latin and received his degree from the famous university at Leyden, introduced vaccination into America, an event spoken of to this day as reflecting honor upon this university city. Treasured to the last was the snuff-box sent by Dr. Jenner which contained the precious virus.

In connection with this subject, should ever be coupled the name of the late Dr. Henry A. Martin, of Boston, who introduced into America and established the cultivation of bovine virus, who eradicated small-pox from the armies of the Union during the late war, and who, since Jenner, was probably the best authority upon the subject of vaccination.

Cotemporaneous with Dr. Jenner and also a student of John Hunter, was England's most famous surgeon of the generation, Sir Astley Cooper. During his career as a teacher, he had under instruction eight thousand pupils, moulded the surgical thought of two continents, and was the author of several works never surpassed in accuracy of description and in beauty of illustration.

Scarpa, the celebrated Italian surgeon, now known to most of you only by the name of a triangle, was scarcely less famous, and was the originator of the important branch of anatomical teaching so valuable to the practical surgeon — regional anatomy.

My genial master, the poet and autocrat of modern New England literature, was a student of Baron

Larrey, the great Surgeon-General of Napoleon, whose works upon military surgery may still be studied with profit.

The achievements of the yet living masters are too recent to require enumeration — Pasteur whose early scientific investigations were the inspiration to the genius of Mr. Lister, which has revolutionized surgery; Virchow, the man of letters, equally distinguished in statemanship as in science, who, as the President of the Berlin International Medical Congress, freely awarded to American surgeons present pre-eminence — histology, pathology, anatomy, bacteriology, surgery, re-written for your instruction by men yet active in moulding and formulating new truths.

What of America and her contributions to the science of medicine during the century? Science is cosmopolitan. Wherever best taught, there her votaries flock to fill the open doors. Thus during the early part of this period, America's best medical men were educated abroad. Upon a proper pedestal we have yet to place a memorial statue to Dr. Benjamin Rush, of Philadelphia — a statesman, signer of the Declaration of Independence, member of Congress, Surgeon-General of the Continental Army, founder of Dickinson College, President of the Society for the Abolition of Slavery, Treasurer of the United States Mint for fourteen years, promoter of public improvements. He was graduated at Princeton, studied medicine in Edinburgh, was a professor in the Philadelphia Medical College, and published many works which were long quoted as authority.

Ephraim McDowell of Kentucky, rendered the world his debtor. He is often referred to as the obscure backwoods surgeon, who stumbled upon a new idea as by accident. It is just a century since Dr. McDowell returned from Edinburgh, where he had been for two years a pupil of the famous John Bell. To the teach-

ing of this great master, Dr. McDowell refers as the source of the conviction which, fourteen years later, found fruition in the first successful ovariectomy.

Nearly midway in the century did the discovery of ether and its practical application by Morton render to surgery the priceless boon of anesthesia. Within a few days have I seen two of the physicians who were present in the amphitheatre of the Massachusetts General Hospital, and witnessed the first surgical operation ever performed under an anesthetic.

It is almost invidious to repeat, even in your hearing, names selected from the many who have contributed to the knowledge of our art in America: Bigelow, father and son, of Boston, each equally famous in their respective subdivisions of labor; Bowditch, world-wide known as physician and philanthropist; Warren, for three generations a famous name in the annals of surgery, the senior, John, student of Sir Astley Cooper, whose teachings served as inspiration to his latest day; Muzzey, Crosby, Smith, Holmes, all New England names; Sims, Flint, Gross, dead yet living; Sayre, Davis, Didama, living and active, around whose memories in early association we fondly linger, from whose teachings we derived inspiration and help, — these and a host of others, we gladly hold up to you as models of good citizens, wise teachers, thoughtful counsellors in sickness and in health, men who leave the world better for their living, immortal because having exerted influences for the moulding of higher life, which will continue to the end of time.

Science takes no backward step. All these co-related, kindred branches have developed in such a way that each is more difficult to teach, and each requires more time on the part of the pupil to master. The general preparation must also be of a much higher order to fit for the proper entrance upon the study of medicine.

By general consensus of opinion, although there are many excellent physicians who have not had this preparatory training, the medical student of to-day should have had a college course of instruction or its equivalent. During the last generation the methods of teaching medicine have greatly changed. Earlier, as a supplement to the personal instruction which the student was supposed to receive by an apprenticeship to the physician selected, the winter courses of lectures were planned. These, together with a limited knowledge derived from dissections, were repeated with slight variation; and at the end of two courses, the student was usually supposed to be fitted for practice and was granted a diploma. There was no prescribed preparation, and the country school-boy was taught, side by side, with the college graduate. The lecture, filled with Latin technicalities, of necessity expressed in terms beyond the comprehension of the immature youth, was often equally unfitted to serve the better purpose of the collegiate. The criticism was apparent, but the remedy not patent.

Your own college was among the very first to take the initiative and demand entrance examinations and graded courses of instruction. You also set the example of permitting final examination only after three years of thorough, careful, satisfactory pupilage. More recently the movement is developing to demand a four years' course of graded instruction and to supply this, it is obligatory to have better teachers and more of them. This necessitates smaller classes, recitation instruction, quite as much as lectures and laboratories. These are veritable workshops, alike for master and apprentice. Anatomy, chemistry, physiology, pathology, bacteriology, materia medica — for all these branches of science, shop-room is required, and in extent quite beyond earlier needs.

The medical college of to-day demands another build-



ing, or series of buildings, than that of the former pattern. The amphitheatre as the lecture-room — cramped, crowded, stifled in the upper rows; to the last degree inconvenient of access; reached by garret-stairs, to descend to seats, as upon an illy-constructed ladder; a nightmare dream of our earlier years — should be relegated to the past. Bright, airy, well-lighted rooms are required, made pleasing and attractive, with good seats and tables, where the personal work may go on under the direction of well-trained assistants.

The modern medical college should be so closely connected with the hospital that the clinical teachings may be made illustrative and profitable. Indeed, the hospital should be the *workshop* in the better sense, where the student becomes familiar with the “living pictures” of our poor broken humanity, the reconstruction of which is to be his future life-long labor.

Hospitals are important for the care, especially, of the poor, the home for the homeless. These, the public have long held in kindly interest and support. As a rule, the best physicians of the respective localities have willingly rendered gratuitous service; but the medical college has been too often looked upon as a private affair, a doctor's business venture, entered into for gain. Should it not, the rather, be considered by the public as a *technical school* of the highest order?

The general public has long felt it a wise investment to furnish the very best opportunities for the education of ministers, teachers, engineers, architects, artists even. Should they not easily see that they have a *vital personal* interest in the proper fitting and training of that large body of *physical engineers* who are to have the oversight of their own persons, to care for and keep in order their own *vital machines*?

In large degree the physicians of Syracuse are graduates of the medical department of your own

university. Note the honor which they reflect upon the persistent, self-sacrificing efforts of your teachers in the years when the standards of medical learning were here first advanced with regard to the quality and attainment of the pupil, rather than to the numbers to be graduated.

The self-interest of the entire public, the rich by no means excepted, demands that the best possible advantages be given the student of medicine, to whom later is to be entrusted the life and welfare of the body politic.

Let the general public, represented by your goodly city, show their approval of the work here so well inaugurated by a generous support given to the medical department of your university. A new building should be erected at once, so commodious and so well equipped that it may not suffer in comparison with any in the great Empire State.<sup>2</sup>

Within a few days I have examined with some care the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, in regard to the advantages offered for the instruction of medical pupils. Here the usual process is reversed. The hospital predominates; but there are laboratories in considerable number with facilities for the teaching of the *science* of medicine, while the *art* is in daily practice in its many splendid wards. The medical college proper is yet to be, but the thought tends directly in the line of small classes, personally trained by competent teachers. These to be competent require special instruction in the art of teaching, now more lacking in medicine than in any of the great departments of science.

The really successful instructor is he who imparts of himself as well as his subject. This has been

<sup>2</sup> At the banquet following the graduation exercises, a subscription was opened. Funds have been received, and a new building to cost \$100,000 is rapidly approaching completion.

termed the "divine afflatus" of his calling; but it is really because such a master knows his subject, and this knowledge begets affection for it. He is "eaten out" by it. It becomes a part of himself, and *it*, as well as *he*, must talk.

There is nothing difficult to understand about such divinity. It is in the boy, when he catches his first rabbit, visits for the first time the circus, and he must tell the whole household about the new experiences. Such love begets knowledge, and to the real student the border lines of the same widen from day to day. Nothing is so detrimental as a half-truth. Let the line be drawn as clearly as possible between ignorance and knowledge.

There is an *art* in medicine as well as a *science*. Let me quote you in illustration from our inimitable Dr. Holmes—mourned by us all—who had the power of imparting even dry facts with the admixture of a wit which had the effervescence and flavor of champagne.

"You will remember, of course, always to get the weather gauge of your patient. I mean to place him so that the light falls on his face and not on yours. It is a kind of ocular duel which is about to take place between you; you are going to look through his features into his pulmonary, hepatic and other internal machinery; and he is going to look into yours quite as sharply to see what you think about his probabilities for time and eternity. No matter how hard he stares at your countenance, he should never be able to read his fate in it. It should be cheerful as long as there is hope, and serene in its gravity when there is nothing left but resignation.

"The face of a physician, like that of a diplomatist, should be impenetrable. Nature is a benevolent old hypocrite; she cheats the sick and dying with illusions better than any anodynes.

"If there are cogent reasons why a patient should be undeceived, do it deliberately and advisedly, but do not betray your apprehensions through your tell-tale features. We had a physician in our city whose smile was commonly reckoned as being worth five thousand dollars a year to him — in the days, too, of moderate incomes. You cannot put on such a smile as that, any more than you can get sunshine without sun; there was a tranquil and kindly nature under it that irradiated the pleasant face it made one happier to meet on his daily rounds. But you can cultivate the disposition and it will work its way through to the surface. Nay, more — you can try to wear a quiet and encouraging look, and it will react upon your disposition and make you like what you seem to be, or at least bring you nearer your own likeness."

Science has not alone shown the safe and sure way in which wounds tend toward recovery, but, as is usually the case, the really, in the end, easy path for the surgeon to pursue. Let the coming century find no practising surgeon who is not master of his surgical technique, as the high priest of a most sacred calling.

Almost unconsciously we are led to think of modern surgical technique as an *art* rather than a science. Let us so accept it. Based upon scientific principles, the work should be artistic; a blundering surgeon may be aseptic, but this should never be an excuse for clumsiness. The true surgeon is skilful, which term means so much, full of that skill which makes his work really automatically correct; like the master of a musical instrument, who through it pours forth the enraptured strains of soul-inspiring, moving power, with never the thought of hand or bow or string.

Anesthesia and asepsis have brought into surgery a small army of men who lack the training which, half a century ago, was considered absolutely essential to success. Then to be a surgeon meant an apprentice-



ship. Should it be less at the present time? The greatest danger to-day lies in the willing, enthusiastic, but half-trained recruits with whom our ranks are overcrowded. Here as elsewhere comes the law of the survival of the fittest, but at what fearful cost of life, matched, almost overshadowed, by the self-condemnation which permits of no condonement!

The recent Address on Surgery before the British Medical Association, by Mr. J. Grieg Smith, "The Art of the Surgeon," should be read by every student, by every surgeon.

"That the art of surgery is teachable there can be no dispute; that it is worth teaching is still less disputable. Why, then, is it not taught? The art can be taught only in one way, the way of teaching all the plastic arts.

"The young artist must, while beginning the practice of his art, have a master at his elbow, a master who will guide him in the use of his hand, his eye, and his instruments; who will in the fullest sense make him his pupil, and personally lead him on, step by step, toward such excellence in the art as he himself has attained. . . .

"We might ask to be put on the level with the fine arts, and seek for a Royal Academy of Surgery, as we have Royal Academies of Painting, Sculpture and Music. To such an academy a school of teachers should be attached. The school would be a surgical hospital, with every known excellence of hygiene and nursing and appliance. The teachers would be those who are superior in our art, the pupils men who are already qualified, who seek for practice in the higher walks of surgery. Then let us work for it."

A great art is not builded in a day. We profit from the experience of our predecessors. The coming centuries will have much to criticise in the review of our labors. Let them also find themselves indebted to

us for much experience of real value in both the science and the art of surgery.

The venerable oath of the great Father of Medicine which you repeat to-day, binds you, as in ancient times, to visit the sick man for the sole purpose of doing him good, and to so conduct yourself as to avoid the appearance of evil. This same bond makes us brethren in a common cause. The teachings of our science, which you are called upon to disseminate are already of such mighty import that, if they were universally adopted, they would divide the sufferings of mankind, increase the longevity of the race one-third, and double its productive power.

In the evolution of medicine and sanitary science lie, in large measure, the happiness and destinies of the ages to come. In the everchanging kaleidoscopic pattern, the individual factors of man's personality should intertwine and blend, as the colors, at the hand of a great artist, in perfect harmonic symmetry and relationship.

Contribute your part to the better development of the mental, the moral, and the physical nature of man; the great *tripod* upon which must ever rest the advancement of the race; and in the harmonic action of these great forces there must evolve the already heralded progress of the twentieth century.





